

Plante Grist Mill  
Route 44  
Chepachet  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HAER No. RI-5

HAER  
RI,  
4-CHEP  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

RI-5

PLANTE GRIST MILL

Date: Circa 1860

Location: U.S. Route 44, Chepachet Vicinity, Providence County  
Rhode Island.

Significance: The Plante Grist Mill is a typical example of owner  
built mill structures that could be found all over  
New England during the mid-19th century.

Transmitted by: Dan Clement, 1983.

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The Nelson Plante estate is located in western Glocester just south of Route #44. It contains approximately 530 acres of farmland, woodland, ponds, streams, sluiceways leading from the Burlingame Reservoir, and a valuable early nineteenth-century farm/mill complex. The farm/mill complex includes six buildings: a farmhouse, c.1820, a large barn and harness shed (originally a cornerrib) both dating from c.1860, a small shed and twentieth century garage, a mid-nineteenth-century grist mill, c.1860, and the stone foundations of a larger saw-mill. All are at present vacant and subject to vandalism.

Glocester records and maps show that in 1790 the "Allen Mill" stood on the site of the Grist Mill. By 1870, a saw-mill owned by A. Burlingame was in operation here and by 1895, a much larger mill complex belonging to H. Hopkins including the grist mill, two saw-mills and a "shoddy mill." Mr. Burlingame, who died in 1970, at the age of 103, indicated that one of the mills was moved here from the Frank Sayles property in Pascoag, Rhode Island. Machinery strewn around the site indicates that shingles, clapboards and barrel staves were manufactured here. Remaining machinery units date from c.1870-80.

Today in the mill complex, only the Grist Mill, c.1860, is standing. This small, wood, one story, structure is typical of the country "grist mill" built about every twenty miles throughout New England and used several months a year for local production. Most of these unsubstantial structures have vanished from the landscape. The present mill with braced-frame structure has only one layer of clapboards fastened over vertical plank sheathing which are probably original. Inside, the grist mill machinery compose of one run of stones and the iron crane is intact. The shed roof extension to the west side of the mill is deteriorating and both windows and wood clapboards need repair. These repairs could reasonably be accomplished without enormous expense to put the mill back into "working condition."